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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4805
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0999
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RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0Q9
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4Q7
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1693
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3421
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0423
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 6868
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4484
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 0823
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0825
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0520
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2759
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0401
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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SUBJECT: BURMESE REGIME REACTS TO POSSIBLE UNSC ACTION

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The government daily newspaper, the New Light of Myanmar (NLM), has recently intensified the quantity and degree of its rhetoric against its political opposition in an ongoing series of multi-page articles. The articles also attempt to counter charges that Burma represents a threat to regional security justifying UN Security Council attention. This has struck a nerve and these articles are the reaction. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The main regime-controlled English daily, the New Light of Myanmar, increased its articles/editorials attacking its political opposition, defending GOB practices, and accusing western interests of trying to overthrow the Burmese regime and install a "puppet" NLD government. The NLM articles describe the opposition as either tools of, or providing bad information to, Western plotters, and warn the Burmese "to be well vigilant against the ongoing political warfare operation of the alien powers through which they are persuading...nations that support Myanmar to marginalize the country, and to bring forward Myanmar affairs to the UNSC to take action against it."

¶3. (SBU) Addressing the international community's concerns about forced labor, a July 6 article states that, "From time immemorial, Myanmar national people have been contributing towards construction of self-reliant roads and bridges of their own volition. Those who use the norms practiced in western countries to make accusations of forced labor have not participated in the construction of a road or bridge." Other articles criticize ILO efforts to reduce forced labor.

Defending Internal Political Stability

¶4. (SBU) The articles try to make the case that only the Tatmadaw (military) can safeguard the Burmese people against the dangers of internal and external insurgents. A June 21 article claimed that the country was on the brink of disaster in 1988 when the Tatmadaw stepped in to create order. Another article on June 19 reported the country was "making strenuous efforts to gain national reconciliation, and further cementing of national unity." Other articles charge some groups with attempting to destabilize Burma, such as the Karen National Union and remnants of the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) now in league with the NLD. Articles on June 18 and June 22 call the KNU a terrorist organization, and justify Burmese Army actions against it as "just, fair and necessary" so that "the motherland did not lose its sovereignty." A June 21 article reports on BCP conspiracies with internal and external saboteurs that aim to "reverse the GOB trend" of peace and prosperity.

¶5. (SBU) The articles assert that democracy on Burma must develop slowly, through the seven-step SPDC Roadmap. According to the June 21 NLM, the Roadmap to democracy has been successful, with the National Convention ready to conclude "in the near future." A July 5 editorial claims, "Liberal democracy may be the right choice for countries like the USA, India, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia. As for Myanmar where democracy has not flourished yet...liberal democracy is stranger to her as a (bald) monk is to a comb. It is not the government that is rejecting liberal democracy, but the objective economic and political situations existing in the nation...What is most appropriate is national democracy (discipline-flourishing democracy), not western liberal democracy." The articles describe the ruling government's policy also as "scientific nationalism." According to the NLM, this means: "priority is given to the domestic market, and the policy will never go extreme and

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will never colonize others."

Discredit the Opposition

¶6. (SBU) Numerous articles have discredited opposition groups, including the NLD, 88 Generation Students, Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and Veteran Politicians, claiming that external forces influence these groups to make unwarranted charges against the regime. A June 22 article states, "We have observed that remnants of the BCP, NCUB, and expatriates, party politicians, veteran politicians, new generations politicians, individual or independent politicians have repeatedly expressed the idea of grabbing State power through inciting internal unrest."

¶7. (SBU) The NLM articles regularly criticize Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership skills and her lack of understanding of the nation. A July 5 article titled, "She who turned alien or danger to the nation," claimed that her release, requested by the US and liberal groups, would be dangerous for her and for the nation. It states, "The government and Daw Suu Kyi and the NLD are moving towards opposite directions...it is absolutely impossible to reach an agreement between the two sides." Asking the GOB for her release is wrong, according to the article, because only she can release herself by giving up her advocacy of "liberal policy." "Until then," it added, "the restrictions (on her) will never be lifted."

¶8. (SBU) The articles charge "powerful nations of the west," or "certain foreign powers" with trying to install NLD as their "minion" and "a puppet government." The articles cite multiple visits made by diplomats to NLD headquarters as proof of these plots, and claim that the visits go beyond proper diplomatic behavior. A June 25 article claims that "the notorious power" is the "mastermind manipulating the strings from behind such internal and external groups" who conspire to overthrow the GOB.

No Cross Border Concerns

¶9. (SBU) The press campaign also tries to address claims that events inside Burma pose a threat to the region. A June 19 article states, "the conditions of Myanmar do not pose any threats to regional security or the security of neighboring countries." A number of articles mention international concerns such as trafficking in persons and drugs, refugees, and diseases. The authors refute criticisms by listing SPDC accomplishments, including declining drug production and abuse, increasing numbers of rescued trafficking victims and prosecuted traffickers, infrastructure construction, growing agricultural production, and accelerating GDP growth. On July 6, another article stated, "The developments and new infrastructures stand witness to the fact that (Burma) is enjoying progress in all sectors and prove that all slanderous accusations against it are wrong." The authors boast that these accomplishments were achieved without international assistance, bolstering regime claims of internal control and stability. They dismiss claims about refugees, describing them as only relatives of KNU members and others who do not want to live under rule of law.

Summing Up

¶10. (SBU) The July 5 article summed up the differences between the regime and its political opposition. "The ruling government is the national government, the policy is the scientific nationalism, the economic system is the

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market-oriented economy or capitalism under the leadership of the state, and the political aim is discipline-flourishing democracy (national democracy) to be introduced in accordance with the Asian wQ." In contrast: "The policy of Daw Suu Kyi and the NLD is not the nationalism, but the liberal way, opposite of nationalism. Their economy is the westernized market economy, their economic policy is capitalism under the leadership of capitalists or liberal economy, and their politics is liberal democracy, not the national democracy."

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Yes. We do support the policies the NLM ascribes to ASSK and the NLD. The regime's diatribes against the pro-democracy opposition and us wax and wane over the years, without changing minds. The discussion of possible UNSC action now has struck a nerve because it challenges the regime's legitimacy before the international community. The Burmese people declared them illegitimate in 1990. End comment.

VILLAROSA